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ABSTRACT

Noting that one of the most powerful weapons to prevent crime are programs such as quality educational child care, after-school and summer programs, and child abuse prevention, this brief presents the school and youth violence prevention plan of an organization of Illinois law enforcement officers, state's attorneys, crime survivors, and leaders of police officer organizations. The plan is detailed in four steps: (1) assure all school-age children and teens access to after-school, weekend, and summer youth development programs to shut down the "prime time for juvenile crime"; (2) assure all babies and preschool children access to early childhood care and school readiness programs proven to cut crime; (3) help parents, early childhood caregivers, and schools identify and assist troubled and disruptive children at an early age, and provide children and their parents the counseling and training that can help equip children with the social emotional skills needed for success; and (4) prevent child abuse and neglect by providing resources and well-trained child protective services to safeguard endangered children and offering high-risk parents the in-home parent-coaching programs proven to cut in half abuse, neglect, and subsequent teen delinquency. The brief asserts that investing in children and youth now will have monetary benefits later in the form of savings to crime victims and society. A list of crime and violence prevention policy recommendations specifically for the state of Illinois concludes the brief. (KB)

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From Illinois' Front Line against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois

2003

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FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS*

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From Illinois' Front Line Against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

AS AN ORGANIZATION OF HUNDREDS OF POLICE CHIEFS, SHERIFFS, STATE'S ATTORNEYS, CRIME SURVIVORS, AND LEADERS OF POLICE OFFICER ORGANIZATIONS, we are determined to see that dangerous criminals are put behind bars. But anyone who thinks that jailing a criminal undoes the agony violence leaves in its wake hasn't seen crime up close.

Illinois' anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the proven programs that help kids get the right start in life — like quality educational child care, after-school and summer programs, child abuse prevention, and intervention programs that get troubled kids back on track.

Yet today, inadequate investments in these tested strategies leave thousands of children at needless risk of becoming violent or delinquent teens and adult criminals — and leave every Illinoisan at needless risk of becoming a victim.

We call on all public officials to adopt this four-part plan to dramatically reduce crime and violence, and help young people learn the skills and values they need to become good neighbors and responsible adults. No plan can prevent every violent act. But this common sense plan is based on our experience and the latest research about what really works and can make all of us safer.

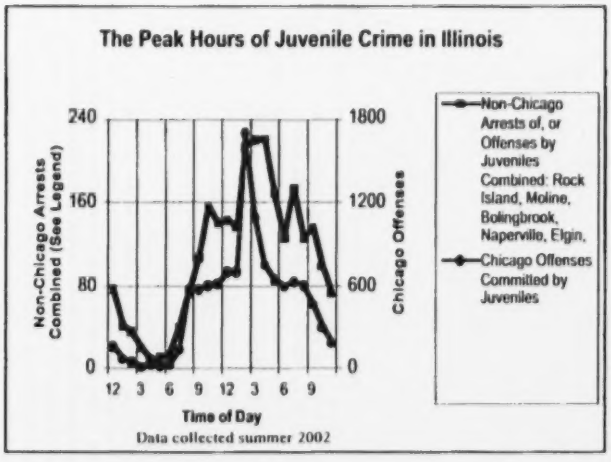
That's why its key components have been endorsed by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS*, by the 1,600 law enforcement leaders who form national FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, and by the:

- **National Sheriffs Association**
- **Police Executive Research Forum**
- **Major Cities Chiefs Organization**
- **National Organization for Victim Assistance**
- **International Association of Chiefs of Police**
- **Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police**
- **Illinois State's Attorneys Association**
- **Illinois Sheriffs' Association**
- **Fraternal Order of Police**

The evidence is in. The verdict is clear. Among those on the front lines, there is a new consensus about what works to prevent crime and violence. Now it is time to act.

The Plan: Four Proven Steps That Really Work

1. Assure all school-age children and teens access to after-school, weekend and summer youth development programs to shut down the "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime."



In the hour after the school bell rings in Illinois, hundreds of thousands of children and teens hit the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision. During that hour violent juvenile crime spikes upward and the "prime time for juvenile crime" begins. A 2002 report from FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS* found that on school days in Illinois, the peak hours for such crime are from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. These are also the hours when kids are most likely to become victims of crime and being unsupervised after-school doubles the risk that eighth graders will smoke, drink, or use drugs.

Quality youth development programs cut crime immediately and transform this Prime Time for Juvenile Crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They protect kids and adults from becoming crime victims, and cut teen pregnancy,

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smoking, and drug use, while they help youngsters develop the values and skills to become contributing citizens. For example:

"There's no doubt about it. More kids in after-school programs mean less crime."

– Chief of Police Doug Hayse, Morris Police Department
President, Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police

- Five housing projects without Boys & Girls club were compared to five getting new clubs. At the beginning, drug use and vandalism were the same. However, by the time the study ended, the projects without the programs had 50% more vandalism and scored 33% worse on drug use.

- High school freshmen were randomly selected from welfare families to participate in the Quantum Opportunities four-year after-school and graduation incentive program. Six years later, compared to those who got the program, boys left out averaged six times more criminal convictions, and girls and boys left out were nearly four times more likely to be without a high school diploma.

- Young people who given a Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentor were half as likely to begin illegal drug use and nearly one-third less likely to hit someone as compared to applicants randomly assigned to a waiting list.

2. Assure all babies and preschool children access to early childhood care and school readiness programs proven to cut crime.

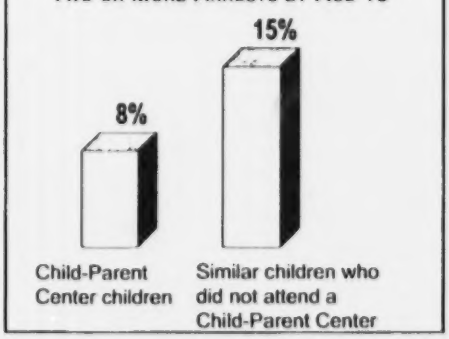
"Nothing can bring back my murdered son. But every family will be safer when our leaders invest in the proven child care programs that help kids become good neighbors instead of killers."
— Carole Grant Hall, Crime Survivor

Rigorous studies, hard experience, and brain images taken by modern medical equipment tell the same story: in the first few years of life, children's intellects and emotions, and even their ability to feel concern for others — the root of "conscience" — are being permanently shaped. When parents are at work trying to make ends meet, nurturing, stimulating, educational child care for babies and toddlers can not only prepare children to succeed in school, but also dramatically reduce crime. For example:

- New research from Chicago tracked for 14 years 989 children who had been enrolled in government-funded Child-Parent Centers while 3- and 4-year olds. Compared to similar children not in the program, only *half* as many kids who participated had two or more arrests in their teens.

Chicago Child-Parent Centers Cut Multiple Teen Arrests in Half

Compared to similar children, three- and four-year-olds enrolled in this quality child care program were about half as likely to have multiple juvenile arrests as they grew up.



- In Syracuse, at-risk infants and toddlers enrolled in a quality child development program, with parenting support for their mothers, were *only one-tenth as likely* as similar children to be delinquent ten years later.

- In Ypsilanti, Michigan, low-income 3- and 4-year olds randomly assigned to be in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program were only *one-fifth as likely* to have become chronic lawbreakers at age 27, compared to similar children denied these services.

3. Help parents, early childhood caregivers, and schools identify and assist troubled and disruptive children at an early age, and provide children and their parents the counseling and training that can help equip kids with the social emotional skills needed for success.

When young children withdraw or display disruptive behavior, it is a warning signal that it is time to start looking for the causes of the problem, and to provide the proven social skills training, counseling, and other help for the children and their families that can lead them back to a **safer** path. For example:

- A Montreal study showed that providing disruptive first- and second-grade boys with services like these **cut in half** the odds that they would later be placed in special classes, rated highly disruptive by a teacher or by peers, or have been required to repeat a grade in school — all signs that the risk of future violence had been sharply reduced.

"We know young people benefit from proper parenting. We know that violent juvenile crime peaks right after school lets out. Therefore, we know that after-school opportunities that provide kids with important values and skills will help them avoid criminal behavior."

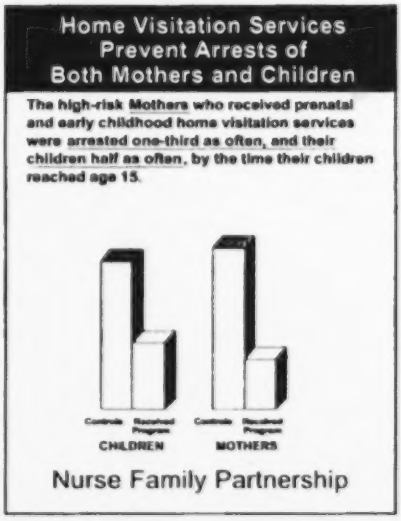
-Champaign County State's Attorney John Piland
President, Illinois State's Attorneys Association

- Five years after randomly-selected disruptive and low-achieving seventh-grade students completed a three-year program involving behavioral therapy and rewards, they were only one-third as likely to have a juvenile record as those who did not receive these services.

4. Prevent child abuse and neglect by: a) Providing resources and well-trained child protective services to safeguard endangered children; and b) Offering high-risk parents the in-home parent-coaching programs proven to cut in half abuse, neglect, and subsequent teen delinquency.

Being abused or neglected multiplies the risk that a child will grow up to be a violent teen or adult. In 2000, more than 27,000 Illinois children were victims of abuse and neglect. Child protective services need sufficient resources to identify and help these children. We also must act before children are hurt by expanding the programs proven to reduce abuse and neglect. Healthy Families Illinois is modeled after a program developed in Hawaii. Recent research indicates that this program also reduces long-term child abuse. In addition:

- The Nurse Family Partnership project randomly assigned half of a group of at-risk mothers to receive visits by specially trained nurses who provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Studies show the program not only *reduced child abuse and neglect by 80%* in the first two years, but that fifteen years after the services ended, these mothers had only one-third as many arrests, and their children were only half as likely to be delinquent.


Home Visitation Services Prevent Arrests of Both Mothers and Children
The high-risk Mothers who received prenatal and early childhood home visitation services were arrested one-third as often, and their children half as often, by the time their children reached age 15.
Control
Received Program
CHILDREN
MOTHERS
Nurse Family Partnership

The Bottom Line: Investing in Kids Saves Lives and Money

"We'll win the battle against crime when we invest our tax dollars in America's most valuable resource, without waiting to see if they grow up appearing on America's Most Wanted."

— Superintendent Terry G. Hillard
Chicago Police Department

When America fails to invest in its children and youth, we pay far more later. The Illinois and federal treasuries will actually have more money to dedicate to other uses a few years from now — whether for education, health care, or tax cuts — if we invest **today** in programs to help kids get the right start. For example:

- Economist Steven Barnett found that the High/Scope Foundation's Perry Preschool *saved $150,000 per participant* in crime costs alone. Even adjusted for inflation, every dollar invested in the program produced a *net savings of $7.16* — including more than six dollars in crime savings.

- A recent Rand Corporation report shows that, even without counting the savings to crime victims and society, the resulting *savings to government* alone from effective early childhood programs *exceeds by two to four times the cost of the programs.*

For citations, additional reports, and graphs, visit www.fightcrime.org

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"When times are tough, we should make long-term investments in prevention. Quality early learning, after-school and home visiting opportunities cut crime and save money."

- Grundy County Sheriff James Olson
President, Illinois Sheriffs' Association

2003 (Fiscal Year 2004) Crime and Violence Prevention Policy Recommendations

I. **Support the Early Learning Illinois (ELI) campaign vision that every child is safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.** Quality early childhood programs for at-risk children cut delinquency rates by as much as 80 percent. The ELI goals are consistent with what we know will significantly cut the numbers of kids who grow up to become criminals.

   A. **Expand Access to and Options for Early Childhood Care and School Readiness Programs Proven to Cut Crime**
      1. **Increase funding for the Early Childhood Education Block Grant by $90 million** – which, will eliminate waiting lists and serve all at-risk kids, **and** increase the set aside for very young children to 10 percent.
      2. **Allow working families to maintain access to Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program** through an update to the child care assistance income eligibility rate that has been frozen since 1997.
      3. Improve coordination among state and local systems of early childhood programs through the **establishment of an Early Learning Council within the governor's office.**
      4. Improve the physical surroundings of children in early care and education. **Establish a Child Care Capital Program to leverage private funding for new construction and renovation of early childhood education facilities.**

   B. **Healthy Families Illinois** provides the voluntary home-visiting and parent education services proven to prevent child abuse. Funding for HFI should be increased to allow for modest growth in FY 2004.

   C. **Identify and Help Troubled Kids Early On to Get Them Back on Track.** If we can help troubled kids early on, we can reduce the number of children that may grow up to become criminals. The Children's Mental Health Task Force is working on a strategic plan to improve the current system and will release their recommendations by the end of March 2003. The strategic plan should be reviewed and appropriate recommendations adopted.

II. **Shut down "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime" by assuring families access to youth development programs for the after-school and summer hours.** Research and evaluation across the country have proven that quality youth development programs can cut crime immediately and transform the Prime Time for Juvenile Crime into golden hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun, and community service. We know that 1.53 million school-age children in Illinois are in households where both parents, or the only parent, are in the workforce. We also know that 41percent of Illinois 8th graders are home alone 10 or more hours a week -- the threshold when the likelihood of problem behaviors increase.

   A. **Increase Funding for Teen R.E.A.C.H. in FY 2004**. We recommend increasing the budget for this effective program by $10 million.

   B. **Support the Resolution Continuing the Illinois After-school Initiative** to extend the collaborative effort led by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services to coordinate out-of-school-time services and better deliver effective programs.

Launched in 1997, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS* is an anti-crime organization made up of leading police chiefs, sheriffs, state's attorneys, crime victims and leaders of police officer organizations. Major funding for its operations is provided by:

McCormick Tribune Foundation • Chicago Community Trust • The Pew Charitable Trust
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Harris Foundation • Oppenheimer Family Fund
Relations Foundation

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS*
is a joint project of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, which is led by more than 1,600 of the nation's leading crime fighters and crime survivors, and the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention (ICVP).

ICVP was founded in 1992 as a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of interpersonal violence. The Center carries out its mission through public education, networking and coordination, advocacy, technical assistance, evaluation, and research.

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